WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1   1. A method of committing a transaction to a database, the method

2 comprising:

3   initiating a database transaction;

4   creating an electronic record that includes transaction data from the

5 database transaction;

6   executing a rule associated with the record to determine whether an

7 electronic signature is required to connote review and/or approval of the electronic

8 record, wherein if execution of the rule results in a determination that an electronic

9 signature is required, requesting the electronic signature prior to committing the

10 transaction to the database.

1   2. The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic record comprises

2 data generated from multiple tables of the database.

1   3. The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic record is stored in

2 a common repository of electronic records that provides an audit trail that cannot be

3 altered or disabled by users of the database.

1   4. The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic record is stored as

2 unstructured data in a character large object (CLOB) format.

1   5. The method of claim 4 wherein the unstructured data comprises a

2 well-formed XML document stored within a column of a database table.

1   6. The method of claim 5 wherein XML fields of the unstructured

2 data are filled with the transaction data based on a predefined mapping of a data type

3 definition to multiple data sources.

1   7. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of, if

2 execution of the rule results in a determination that an electronic signature is required,

3 displaying at least some of the transaction data in the electronic record on a computer

4 display and requesting the electronic signature.

1   8. The method of claim 7 wherein the transaction data in the

2 electronic record is displayed according to a predefined layout set forth in an XSL style

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3   sheet and wherein the unstructured data further comprises a copy of the electronic

4   record as displayed in a second column of the database table.

1   9.   The method of claim 1 further comprising obtaining and

2   verifying the electronic signature, and thereafter, committing the database transaction to

3   the database.

1   10.   The method of claim 1 wherein the rule requires a plurality of

2   different electronic signatures and wherein, if execution of the rule results in a

3   determination that a plurality of electronic signatures are required, requesting the

4   plurality of electronic signatures prior to committing the data to the database.

5   11.   The method of claim 9 wherein, if the electronic signature is

6   rejected or otherwise cannot be obtained, the transaction is rolled-back and not

7   committed to the database.

1   12.   A computer system that manages electronic records stored in a

2   database, the computer system comprising:

3   a processor;

4   a database; and

5   a computer-readable memory coupled to the processor, the computer-

6   readable memory configured to store a computer program;

7   wherein the processor is operative with the computer program to:

8   (i) initiate a database transaction;

9   (ii) create an electronic record that includes transaction data from the

10   database transaction; and

11   execute a rule associated with the record to determine whether an

12   electronic signature is required to connote review and/or approval of the electronic

13   record, wherein if execution of the rule results in a determination that an electronic

14   signature is required, requesting the electronic signature prior to committing the

15   transaction to the database.

1   13.   The computer system of claim 12 wherein the electronic record

2   comprises data generated from multiple tables of the database.

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1   14.   The computer system of claim 12 wherein the electronic record

2   is stored in a common repository of electronic records that provides an audit trail that

3   cannot be altered or disabled by users of the system.

1   15.   The computer system of claim 12 wherein the electronic record

2   comprises unstructured data in a character large object (CLOB) format.

1   16.   The computer system of claim 15 wherein the unstructured data

2   comprises a well-formed XML document stored within a column of a table stored in the

3   database

4   17.   The computer system of claim 16 wherein fields of the electronic

5   record are filled with the transaction data based on a predefined mapping of a data type

6   definition to multiple data sources.

1   18.   The computer system of claim 12 further comprising obtaining

2   and verifying the electronic signature, and thereafter, committing the database

3   transaction to the database.

1   19.   A computer program stored on a computer-readable storage

2   medium for managing electronic records stored in a database, the computer program

3   comprising:

4   code for initiating a database transaction;

5   code for creating an electronic record that includes transaction data from

6   the database transaction; and

7   code for executing a rule associated with the record to determine

8   whether an electronic signature is required to connote review and/or approval of the

9   electronic record, wherein if execution of the rule results in a determination that an

10   electronic signature is required, requesting the electronic signature prior to committing

11   the transaction to the database.

1   20.   The computer program of claim 19 wherein the code for creating

2   an electronic record creates electronic records in response to the occurrence of a

3   predefined event.

1   21.   The computer program of claim 19 wherein the electronic record

2   is stored in a common repository of electronic records that provides an audit trail that

3   cannot be altered or disabled by users of the system.

1   22.   The computer program of claim 21 wherein the electronic record

2   comprises unstructured data in a character large object (CLOB) format.

1   23.   The computer program of claim 22 wherein the unstructured data

2   comprises a well-formed XML document stored within a column of a table stored in the

3   database.

1   24.   The computer program of claim 23 wherein fields of the

2   electronic record are filled with the transaction data based on a predefined mapping of a

3   DTD to multiple data sources.

1   25.   The computer program of claim 19 further comprising code for

2   obtaining and verifying the electronic signature, and thereafter, committing the

3   electronic record to the database.

1   26.   A method of committing a transaction to a database, the method

2   comprising:

3   automatically creating an electronic record including transaction data

4   associated with the transaction in response to the occurrence of a predetermined event,

5   wherein the electronic record comprises the transaction data stored as a well-formed

6   XML document in a character large-object (CLOB) format of a column of a database

7   table;

8   storing the electronic record in a common repository of electronic

9   records that provides an audit trail that cannot be altered or deleted by users of the

10   system;

11   executing a rule associated with the electronic record to determine

12   whether an electronic signature is required to connote review and/or approval of the

13   electronic record; and

14   if execution of the rule results in a determination that an electronic

15   signature is required, (i) displaying the transaction data in the electronic record

16   according to a predefined layout set forth in an XSL style sheet associated with the

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17 electronic record and storing a copy of the transaction data as displayed in a character

18 large-object (CLOB) format of a second column of the database table and (ii)

19 requesting, obtaining and verifying the electronic signature prior to committing the

20 transaction into a database.

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